



August 2, 2005

Top Stories

- **Message from the Assistant Secretary: N4A Conference**
- **The Next Stage in Medicare Modernization Outreach**
- **Register for the 3rd National Prevention Summit**

Message from the Assistant Secretary: N4A Conference

I was thrilled to have the opportunity to speak at N4A's 30th Annual Conference last month in Seattle where I talked about my vision for the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. I believe the Reauthorization provides us a unique opportunity to build on the Act's mission and success to help our nation better prepare for the aging of the baby boom generation. This means strengthening the role of the Act in the future of health and long-term care by using state-of-the-art practices and the best available science to create more opportunities for prevention and early intervention. It means empowering more of our citizens to take control of their health and long-term care by helping people – including middle-aged individuals - to plan ahead for their long-term care needs. It means building on the partnerships we have launched over the past four years, such as Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Evidence-Based Prevention, Cash & Counseling, and the Own Your Future Campaign. It also means being able to document – through the outcomes we produce – that we are adding measurable value to our national health and long-term care agenda.

Building partnerships with the health sector is one of our strategies for modernizing the Older Americans Act. Dr. Mark McClellan, the Administrator of CMS, joined me in Seattle by live satellite feed to speak to the Conference audience about the important role the Aging Services Network is playing in reaching out to the people we serve to help them learn about and enroll in the new drug benefit that becomes available in January 2006 under the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003.

Dr. McClellan highlighted the importance of taking a "personalized approach" to communicating with beneficiaries about the new law. Dr. McClellan emphasized that those of us involved in this outreach effort do not have to master every single detail of the MMA in order to effectively assist older people. Different segments of the population will need different information. Dr. McClellan identified five distinct groups in the beneficiary population and then went on to talk about the specific type of information we need to convey to people, depending on the group into which they fall. For more information about these five groups go to:

<http://www.aoa.gov/Medicare/resources/FiveGroups.pdf>.

Finally, I had the pleasure of announcing a new partnership with N4A, NASUA, NCOA and a variety of other national aging organizations to help provide training and resources to the aging network as they provide assistance to persons with Medicare on the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. We will be working together to provide enrollment support to hard-to-reach populations and their caregivers including African American, Hispanic, Asian, home—bound, residents of long-term care facilities and rural populations. N4a will be working through the AoA and CMS regional office campaign structures to integrate the aging network for training opportunities, obtaining CMS materials for the network and coordinating media opportunities. Technical assistance will be provided through training opportunities including conference calls, web-based training, listserves and one-on-one support.

A full copy of my remarks can be found at:

http://www.aoa.gov/press/speeches/2005/07_July/2005_n4a_conference.pdf.

Josefina G. Carbonell

The Next Stage in Medicare Modernization Outreach

June 16, 2005, marked a significant day for Medicare, as President Bush, joined by Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt and CMS Administrator Dr. Mark McClellan, hosted a "Medicare Covers America" kickoff rally at the Hubert Humphrey Federal Building in Washington, D.C. The rally launched a new stage in the national effort to get comprehensive drug coverage to the more than 42 million people with Medicare who need help paying for their prescription drugs. Medicare is partnering with many state and local organizations, as well as patient advocacy groups, to launch a national grassroots education campaign to give people with Medicare good information and good advice about Medicare's new drug coverage before it takes effect on January 1, 2006. We need your help in spreading the word about how the drug benefit will help individuals pay for the drugs they need. This new help is available to everyone with Medicare, no matter how they pay for their drugs today, and extra help is available for those with limited resources. This new coverage includes brand-name and generic drugs and is available through both neighborhood and mail-order pharmacies. Please join in the grassroots education effort by forwarding this email notice to other organizations that share our commitment to helping millions of America's seniors and people with a disability with their prescription drug costs. For outreach resource materials and partner information, please visit our website "Partner Center" at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/>. Detailed information from Medicare will be available in October 2005. For more information on who can get extra help with prescription drug costs and how to apply, call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213, or visit www.ssa.gov. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.

Register for the 3rd National Prevention Summit

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt invites you to attend the 3rd National Prevention Summit. The Summit, Innovations in Community Prevention, will focus on chronic disease prevention and health promotion and will feature innovative prevention

programs that are making a difference in communities across the country. These programs are focused on healthy lifestyle choices, including eating a nutritious diet, being physically active, avoiding high-risk behaviors, and getting preventive screenings to prevent the major health burdens created by obesity, diabetes, asthma, cancer, heart disease, and stroke. A special emphasis this year will be placed on health promotion and disease prevention for older Americans and the use of health literacy and information technology to promote prevention. Secretary Leavitt will announce the winners of this year's Innovation in Prevention Awards at the Summit luncheon. The 3rd National Prevention Summit will be held October 24 and 25, 2005, at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. Registration is free. Early registration is recommended as space is limited. All participants must register to attend. There will be no onsite registration! To register online, visit www.healthierus.gov.

More Articles:

Medicare News

- **New Enhancements to AoA and CMS Partnership**
- **Calendar of Key Dates for the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage**
- **New BenefitsCheckUpRx for People with Medicare**

Transportation News

- **Easy Rider: Advancing Mobility Needs for Aging Americans**

AOA News

- **HHS Awards \$10.5 Million for State Alzheimer's Disease Demonstration Grants**
- **AoA Awards \$ 9.4 Million for Senior Medicare Patrol Projects**
- **AoA Announces New *You Can!* Celebration and Webinar Series**

Policy and Program Updates

- **CMS Announces Medicare Demonstration for Adult Day Care Services**
- **African Americans Urged to Discuss Kidney Disease at Family Reunions**

Making a Difference

- **Ombudsman Program Cited on National TV**

Of Interest

- **How to Help Older Adults Beat the Heat**
- **Five Vision Topics Added to NIH Senior Health Web Site**
- **So that All May Read**
- **Help Spread the Word: It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes**

Medicare News

New Enhancements to AoA and CMS Partnership

On July 11, AoA announced that it has signed a contract with N4A to work with two other major national associations to help provide training and resources to the aging network as they provide assistance in enrolling persons with Medicare in the new prescription drug benefit. AoA will be working with N4A, NASUA, and NCOA on this project to provide enrollment support to hard-to-reach populations and their caregivers including African Americans, Hispanic, Asian, homebound individuals, residents of long-term care facilities and rural populations. Over the coming months AoA, CMS, and N4A will work closely together to identify areas where there may be gaps in service and provide training and resources to the aging network to help fill those gaps. This project builds on the AoA and CMS enhanced partnership announced on June 14 to help people with Medicare learn more about the new benefits provided under the Medicare Modernization and Improvement Act of 2003. Dr. Mark McClellan, CMS Administrator, and the Assistant Secretary for Aging discussed the significance of this partnership during a conference call with the National Aging Services Network and SHIP providers. Through the AoA and CMS partnership, the Aging Services Network will play an integral role in assisting people with Medicare as they learn about and enroll in the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage. To download a copy of the Assistant Secretary for Aging's remarks visit: [http://www.aoa.gov/Medicare/news/media/Conf_Call%20Final%20MMA%20Josefina%20points%200605fb%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/Medicare/news/media/Conf_Call%20Final%20MMA%20Josefina%20points%200605fb%20(2).pdf) For more information about how to get involved go to: <http://www.aoa.gov/medicare/News/default.asp>

Calendar of Key Dates for the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Members of the aging network will want to be aware of several key dates as we all prepare for the coming of the Medicare Prescription drug coverage. These dates are:

- July—
The Social Security Administration begins sending letters informing those who applied for extra help whether they qualify.
- October—
 - Comparative information about Medicare prescription drug plans will be available at www.medicare.gov, 1-800-MEDICARE, or through State Health Insurance Programs and other local organizations.
 - Medicare & You 2006 Handbook containing all the necessary information is mailed to all Medicare households.
 - Medicare Advantage plans notify plan enrollees about enhanced drug plan coverage options via "Notification of Change."
 - People with Medicare and Medicaid will get information about how they will be automatically enrolled in a plan if they do not choose one on their own.

- November—
Enrollment for Medicare prescription drug plans begin November 15. People must call the company offering the plan to enroll or enroll through 1-800-MEDICARE.
- December—
People should enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan now to pay lower premiums and to receive prescription drug coverage when it begins January 1, 2006.
- January 2006—
 - Medicare prescription drug coverage begins January 1 for those who enrolled in a plan by December 31, 2005.
 - Medicare begins to provide prescription drug coverage for those who have Medicare and full Medicaid coverage.
- May 2006—
May 15 is the last day to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan and pay lower premiums.

For a complete calendar of important dates for people with Medicare during 2005 and 2006 visit: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/calendar/BeneficiaryCalendar.pdf>.

New BenefitsCheckUpRx for People with Medicare

AoA, in partnership with The National Council on Aging, is sponsoring a new web-based service to help people with Medicare and other older adults learn about and enroll in government benefits, including the new Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage and other valuable federal, state and private programs that can improve their health and quality of life. It helps organizations save time in establishing individual eligibility for programs and also provides access to hundreds of application forms in one place. The new, co-sponsored version of BenefitsCheckUpRx provides screening and enrollment assistance not only for Medicare's extra help available to people with limited incomes and resources under the new Medicare drug coverage, but also for state prescription assistance programs, private company patient assistance programs as well as Medicare Savings Program, Veterans and TRICARE benefits, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicare-approved drug discount cards (until December 2005). Both AoA and NCOA encourage community-based organizations to begin using the service immediately to reach seniors and younger persons with disabilities who may be eligible for the extra help the coverage provides. BenefitsCheckUpRx is free and completely confidential. It does not require user's name, address, phone number, or Social Security number. The challenge of enrolling more than seven million Medicare Beneficiaries with limited incomes is described in a new report entitled, *Pathways to Success: Meeting the Challenge of Enrolling Medicare Beneficiaries with Limited Incomes* by the Access to Benefits Coalition. To use the BenefitsCheckUpRx service, go to: www.BenefitsCheckUpRx.org. For a copy of the report go to <http://www.accesstobenefits.org/library/pdf/ABC%20ReportFNL62305.pdf>

Transportation News

Easy Rider: Advancing Mobility Needs for Aging Americans

On May 16th, 2005, the American Public Transit Administration announced a special program to help older Americans stay mobile called "Easy Rider: Advancing Mobility Needs for Aging Americans." The APTA press release notes "Easy Rider is a collection of successful activities, sample materials and case studies contributed by

transit systems that have taken steps to make public transportation more attractive for seniors. More than 6,000 transit systems nationwide currently provide some form of service for older riders." Best practices stories really help communities know what strategies are most effective in developing comprehensive, transportation coordinated communities. AoA will soon release a transportation toolkit that features best practices case studies and resources for the aging network with information on how to achieve increases in transportation options for older adults. FTA now features best practices on the United We Ride website at: www.unitedweride.gov. For more information on the Easy Rider initiative and to download of copy of the press release, go to URL: https://www.apta.com/media/releases/documents/050516stay_mobile.pdf

AoA News

HHS Awards \$10.5 Million for State Alzheimer's Disease Demonstration Grants

During the 30th Annual National Association of Area Agencies on Aging Conference, the Assistant Secretary announced \$10.5 million to further the development of innovative approaches to provide care for people with Alzheimer's disease and support for their family caregivers. The award includes \$2.6 million to expand three-year systems change demonstration programs in nine states as well as support a one-year capacity building demonstration program in New Jersey. In addition to the ten new awards, approximately \$7.9 million in continuation funding was recently awarded to 28 states. The Alzheimer's Disease Demonstration Grants to States Program works to improve the responsiveness of home and community-based services to persons with dementia and their caregivers. The ADDGS Program supports the goals of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, a government-wide framework for helping people with disabilities by providing them with the tools they need to fully access and participate in their communities. Descriptions of the new projects and amounts of each award are listed below. For more information on the ADDGS program, other information about Alzheimer's disease and tips for families affected by it, please visit the AoA web site at <http://www.aoa.gov/alz>.

AoA Awards \$9.4 Million for Senior Medicare Patrol Projects

On July 11, the Assistant Secretary awarded \$9.4 million to 64 Senior Medicare Patrol projects, including 38 new project awards. These projects will train retired professionals to help older Americans become better health care consumers by identifying unintended Medicare and Medicaid billing errors as well as potentially fraudulent activity. AoA provides these grants to states, territories, local, and community-based non-profit organizations. The Senior Medicare Patrol projects teach volunteer retired professionals, such as doctors, nurses, accountants, investigators, law enforcement personnel, attorneys and teachers, to help Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, their families and caregivers to be better health care consumers. Since 1997, these projects and other AoA grants have educated or counseled more than two million beneficiaries. More than 47,085 complaints were reported by beneficiaries and 4,365 of these complaints were referred for action and investigated. The documentation of these complaints by SMPs resulted in savings of \$104.2 million for the Medicare and Medicaid Program. For more information visit: http://www.aoa.gov/press/pr/2005/05_July/07_11_05c.asp.

AoA Announces New *You Can!* Celebration and Webinar Series

AoA recently announced the *You Can!* Celebration by encouraging its partners to join in celebrating ways for older adults to be active and healthy this September. During any seven-day period of September, AoA invites *You Can!* partners to create *You Can!* Celebration activities. These are activities where participants can make a pledge and engage in healthier lifestyle activities. If they see how easy and enjoyable it can be, hopefully older adults will continue the nutrition and physical activity behaviors and help others to improve their health. All community partners that sign up and complete the contest entry form have a chance to receive awards. The contest will culminate with a ceremony in the Washington, DC metro area in October where the best entries in leadership categories will be recognized. AoA also is hosting a series of monthly Webinars for *You Can!* partners that offer peer-to-peer learning opportunities through presentations by colleagues that have demonstrated successes in topic areas. For more information about the *You Can!* Celebration visit: http://www.aoa.gov/youcan/partners_public/celebration/celebration.asp. For more information about upcoming Webinars visit: <http://www.aoa.gov/youcan/news/news.asp#072005>. For more information or to join the campaign go to: www.aoa.gov/youcan.

Policy and Program Updates

CMS Announces Medicare Demonstration for Adult Day Care Services

On June 23, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announced plans for a demonstration project that will allow some Medicare beneficiaries to receive medical adult day care services under the home health benefit. The demonstration will provide an opportunity for home health agencies to partner with medical adult day care facilities to provide medical adult day-care services to Medicare beneficiaries as a substitute for a portion of home health services that would otherwise be provided in the home. The demonstration is authorized by Section 703 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003. For more information visit: <http://www.aoa.gov/Medicare/news/media/DayCareFinal.pdf>

African Americans Urged to Discuss Kidney Disease at Family Reunions

As African Americans across the country prepare for family reunions this summer, NIH is encouraging them to bring "health to the table" by alerting family members about their risks for kidney disease. The National Kidney Disease Education Program has launched the initiative to encourage African Americans who are attending reunions to reach out to relatives who have leading risk factors for kidney disease -- diabetes or high blood pressure. African Americans are four times more likely than whites to develop kidney failure. Furthermore, diabetes and high blood pressure account for 70 percent of kidney failure in African Americans. Because diabetes and high blood pressure run in families, reunions offer good opportunities to discuss kidney disease. To help families talk about kidney disease, NKDEP has created a free, online Kidney Connection Toolkit containing everything needed to share important kidney health information at reunions. For more information and to download the NKDEP toolkit, visit: <http://www.nkdep.nih.gov/familyreunion/index.htm>.

Making a Difference

Ombudsman Program Cited on National TV

On June 16, the Today morning news show featured a discussion about assisted living based on an article in the July issue of Consumer Reports, *Assisted living: How much assistance can you really count on?* During the segment, the AoA funded Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program was mentioned as a resource and viewers were encouraged to contact an ombudsman if they were considering an assisted living facility. The point was made that there is an ombudsman program in every state. This mention gave prime visibility to the program and how Ombudsmen provide helpful information and assistance to consumers. The article can be downloaded at at: http://www.consumerreports.org/main/content/display_report.jsp?FOLDER%3C%3Efolder_id=651281&ASSORTMENT%3C%3EEast_id=333141&bmUID=1118155601408. For more information on the Ombudsman Program, visit the Ombudsman Resource Center's website www.ltombudsman.org.

Of Interest

How to Help Older Adults Beat the Heat

Older persons are at particular risk for heat related illnesses. These illnesses can be as serious as they are preventable. Hot weather is one of the common causes of heat illnesses. Dehydration is also a common cause of heat illness. Some of the things older adults can do to lower their risk of heat-related illness are:

- Drink plenty of liquids — water or fruit and vegetable juices.
- If you live in a home or apartment without fans or air conditioning, be sure to follow these steps to lower your chance of heat problems: open windows at night; create cross-ventilation by opening windows on two sides of the building; cover windows when they are in direct sunlight; and keep curtains, shades, or blinds drawn during the hottest part of the day.
- Try to spend at least two hours a day (if possible during the hottest part of the day) some place air-conditioned — for example, the shopping mall, the movies, the library, a senior center, or a friend's house if you don't have air conditioning.
- Check with your local area agency on aging to see if there is a program that provides window air conditioners to seniors who qualify.

For more information about avoiding heat-related diseases visit:

<http://www.niapublications.org/engagepages/hyperther.asp>.

Five Vision Topics Added to NIHSeniorHealth Web Site

Eye diseases and conditions leading to vision loss increase significantly with age, and the number of people with vision loss is expected to rise as the population grows older. To help older adults learn more about these conditions and vision loss, the NIHSeniorHealth Web site has added five new topics on vision: glaucoma, cataract, age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and low vision. Accurate, up-to-date information about these conditions is only a mouse click away at www.nihseniorhealth.gov. Sign up for NIA's e-mail alerts and get up-to-date information about news, announcements, and publications at www.niapublications.org.

So that All May Read

A free library service is available to help people of all ages whose low vision, blindness, or physical handicap makes it difficult to read or use a standard printed page such as a newspaper. The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Library of Congress network of regional libraries brings books and magazines on cassettes and in braille into the hands of seniors and other qualifying American residents and citizens. The program loans members a wide selection of recorded books and magazines, braille books and magazines, and music scores in braille and large print. The Talking Books program has been popular with seniors and senior groups for some time. In fact, they are some of the most avid users of NLS services. The membership application requires the signature of an official source such as a doctor, caseworker or an NLS regional librarian in order to join the program. Many senior groups and programs may assist with this process. Once an application is completed, the playback equipment for the Talking Books program will be sent within three working days. An initial shipment of books and catalogs is usually sent within the following two working days. An NLS reader advocate also may follow up to better personalize the selection of materials. Materials are shipped and returned via U.S. Postal Service at no cost. For more information or additional assistance, call

1-888-NLS-READ (1-888-657-7323). Membership applications may be requested from the closest regional or sub regional library. A searchable list of locations is available at www.loc.gov/nls.

Help Spread the Word: It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes

As we get older, our risk for developing type 2 diabetes increases. But the landmark Diabetes Prevention Program clinical trial has shown that modest weight loss through healthy eating and increased physical activity is highly effective at preventing or delaying the onset of type 2 diabetes in people over age 60. The National Diabetes Education Program, a joint program of the NIH and CDC, has produced a feature article targeted to older Americans about spreading the word that it's not too late to prevent diabetes. You may tailor the article and include in newsletters that are read by older adults.

http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/v1n5_Its_Not_Too_Late.pdf.

For more information about the NDEP program visit: www.ndep.nih.gov .

Disclaimer from the U.S. Administration on Aging

Information presented in the enclosed articles does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Administration on Aging or any of its employees. AoA is not responsible for the contents of any "off-site" web pages referenced in this newsletter. Although the AoA e-news includes links to sites including or referencing good collections of information, AoA does not endorse ANY specific products or services provided by public or private organizations. By using the AoA e-news, the user takes full responsibility for any use of these links.

AoA e-news information

Archives can be accessed via the AoA web site at:

http://www.aoa.gov/press/enewsletter/archive/enewsletter_archive.asp

To unsubscribe, reply to this e-mail and insert the word "unsubscribe" in the text box. You can now subscribe online at www.aoa.gov.

About AoA

AoA works with a nationwide network of organizations and service providers to make support services and resources available to older persons and their caregivers. For more information about AoA, please contact us by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201; by phone at (202) 619-0724; by e-mail at aoainfo@aoa.gov; or visit us on the Web at www.aoa.gov.